

WORKERS WORLD

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As aggressors withdraw Gaza lives on despite U.S.-Israeli terror war

By Deirdre Griswold

The Palestinian people, bloodied but unbowed, have won the most uneven of battles.

The brutal scenario cooked up in the war rooms of the Israeli military and the Pentagon didn't work.

The 23-day blitzkrieg against the people of Gaza and their democratically chosen leadership, Hamas, was supposed to break their spirit. Instead, it united the Palestinians more than ever against their oppressors and brought tears and roars of support from around the world.

The attackers seemed to have everything on their side:

- Highly trained troops bristling with the latest weapons.
- Total command of the air and sea around the tiny Gaza Strip, which is crowded with 1.5 million Palestinian refugees.
- An 18-month-long blockade that allowed the Israelis to turn off food, fuel, medicine and water like shutting a spigot.
- The complicity of all the imperialist powers, especially the U.S. Washington

supplies Israel with weapons and money for its death machine, let it become a nuclear power, and has blocked any international action that even whispered criticism of the racist Israeli settler state.

• A Western-dominated world corporate media that, with few exceptions, sides with Israel.

Yet by Jan. 20 it was being reported that most of Israel's troops had withdrawn from Gaza without a formal cease-fire, meaning without Tel Aviv being able to impose conditions on the Palestinians. A coalition of resistance groups—including Hamas, Islamic Jihad, al-Nidal, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and al-Saeqa—had two days earlier announced a unilateral cease-fire on the condition that the Israelis withdraw within a week.

Not a war but a massacre

As the troops withdrew, aid workers were finally able to search the rubble for bodies. The destruction imposed by the invading troops and by air strikes had been horrendous.

According to the Palestinian National

Authority, by the time of the cease-fire more than 1,300 Gazans were confirmed killed, more than half of them civilians, and more than 5,400 wounded. About two-thirds of the civilians killed were children. Property damage in Gaza was estimated at \$2 billion. By contrast, Israel lost 13 people, 10 of whom were soldiers. Yet the corporate media decry "violence on both sides."

Even with a cease-fire, the death toll of Palestinians continues to rise hourly as decaying corpses are found in the shattered remains of buildings. They had lain there for days because the unadmitted policy of the Israeli military was to target rescue workers. It was reported that 13 medical workers were killed by the Israelis—most shot down while trying to recover civilian casualties.

Other atrocity stories are finally making it to the outside world.

Residents of the village of Khuza'a in southern Gaza on Jan. 18 told reporters for a London newspaper what had happened there during a sustained 12-hour assault by Israel.

"Israeli soldiers entering the village attempted to bulldoze houses with civilians inside; killed civilians trying to escape under the protection of white flags; opened fire on an ambulance attempting to reach the wounded; and used indiscriminate force in a civilian area and fired white phosphorus shells," survivors had reported.

In one incident, Israeli troops ordered 30 residents to leave their homes and walk to a school in the village center. After they had gone about 60 feet, troops fired on the

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Many marched on King Day in solidarity with Gaza. NYC, Jan. 19.

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**BAIL OUT
THE PEOPLE**
Movement meets
in NYC

Youth discuss action plan, movement building at Jan. 17 conference in NYC. See page 3.



WW PHOTO: GARY WILSON

'Hold the applause'

Following is a commentary from political prisoner Bomani Shakur, one of the Lucasville Five, now on death row in Ohio on false charges from a 1993 prison uprising. Shakur was convicted as Keith LaMar.

History could not have created a more poignant scene. In the midst of what may be the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression in a country known for its racial injustice, the United States elected its first Black president. Walking out amid a sea of screaming supporters—the majority of them African-American—Barack Obama (cool, calm and collected) stepped up to the podium and announced, “Change has come to America!”

Given the past eight years of the Bush administration with its long train of abuses and human rights violations, it’s virtually impossible to argue against the notion that by the mere act of electing a new president, America has entered into a new era of transformation.

Some have even gone as far as to call it a “post-racial” era and claim that we have finally arrived at the much ballyhooed “promised land” that the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about before his untimely death in 1968.

Indeed, the spirit of Dr. King has loomed large over Obama’s meteoric rise to political prominence, and one would have to be blind not to see the similarities. However, in focusing on these similarities, it’s important to note that the comparisons are being made with the minister who gave the famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

It was in this speech that Dr. King evoked images of a color-blind society. But what many people don’t know is that, by the time he was assassinated (and many would argue, the reason why he was assassinated), Dr. King had undergone a transformation in his thinking and had begun to shed many of his illusions about race in America.

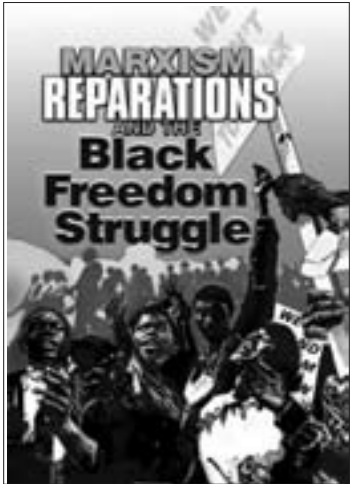
More than the color of skin, he began to comprehend that it was the system of capitalism itself, which uses race as a weapon to shield and conceal a very unjust economic arrangement, that was the true culprit of inequality in America. After all the marching and sitting-in had produced the much-demanded “Civil Rights Act of 1964”

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

The following sections of the book are an outline of its contents: • Black liberation & the working-class struggle • The material basis for reparations in the U.S. • Brief overview of racist oppression

& heroic resistance • What Hurricane Katrina exposed to the world • Africa: A battleground against colonialism and for sovereignty • Justice for the Caribbean • A salute to women revolutionaries • Why fight-back is inevitable • Black labor and class solidarity

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: SAHU BARRON



Bomani Hondo Shakur

WW PHOTO

and the “National Voting Rights Act of 1965,” he found that for the poorest citizens things were pretty much the same and that those in power intended them to remain so.

COMMENTARY

In what turned out to be a fateful decision, Dr. King decided to travel to Memphis, Tenn., in order to lend his voice to poor sanitation workers who were agitating for higher wages and safer working conditions. It was here among poor, working-class citizens that he exhibited the pivotal shift to asking, “What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated counter if he doesn’t earn enough to buy a hamburger and a cup of coffee?” He issued a challenge to those who gathered to hear him speak:

“Don’t go back on the job until the demands are met [cheers]. Never forget that freedom must be demanded by the oppressed. Freedom is not some lavish dish that the power structure will voluntarily hand out on a silver platter while [we] merely furnish the appetite [applause]. If we are going to get equality, if we are going to get adequate wages, we are going to have to struggle for it.” (Michael K. Honey, “Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King’s Last Campaign,” pp. 302-303)

These words, spoken over 40 years ago, are just as relevant today as in 1968. If we are going to build a better world for our children, if we are going to stop those in power from taking our homes, our jobs and our freedom, we are going to have to struggle for it. Achieving real change is going to require that the whole system of corporate capitalism be completely dismantled, and the only way to do this is by coming together and speaking truth to power.

How fitting is it, then, that Martin Luther King Day falls on the eve of Barack Obama’s inauguration. Before we witness the first Black man to become the 44th president of the U.S., we should reflect on what would have been on Dr. King’s mind during this momentous occasion.

Although he fought long and hard for Black people to be treated equally, I doubt that he would be in a celebrating mood. He would be proud, yes, but foremost on his mind would be the 9,000 people a day who are losing their homes; the 2.2 million who have lost their jobs; the over 2 million who are behind bars; the hundreds who are still being unlawfully detained at Guantánamo Bay; the thousands who are fighting in unjust wars; and the billions of poor people around the world who are living on less than \$3 a day while giant corporations pay out multimillion dollar bonuses to their senior executives. Pondering these things, he would know that we have not yet arrived and he would implore us to, please, hold the applause. □

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As economic hardships worsen

Conference pushes ahead with fightback strategy

By Monica Moorehead
New York

Despite single-digit freezing weather and concurrent political events connected to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend, 200 activists attended the first of a number of mini-conferences to discuss and strategize around a united fightback program of action to challenge the deepening economic crisis, especially inside the U.S. The six-hour conference took place on Jan. 17 at a Manhattan public school and was called by the Bail Out the People Movement. A similar conference will take place in Los Angeles on Jan. 24.

The social composition of the conference was multinational with a third of the participants being Black. Most participants were from the East Coast. Many youth and students attended, with a large delegation traveling from the North Carolina cities of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill. Several young people were Palestinian.

Joyce Chediac, a Lebanese-American activist, dedicated the conference to the heroic resistance of the people of Gaza during a three-week, genocidal, military assault against them by the U.S.-backed Israeli military.

The Republic Windows and Doors workers, who held a successful occupation of their Chicago factory in early December, sent a message of solidarity to the conference.

Plenary speakers included Naeema Muhammad, a leader of Black Workers for Justice and the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network; Bernadette Ellorin, secretary-general of BAYAN-USA; Jerry Goldberg, a Detroit activist with the Moratorium Now! Coalition Against Foreclosures and Evictions; Charles Jenkins, a labor activist from Take Back Our Union and the May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Worker Rights; Jabbar Magruder, Iraq Veterans Against the War; Victor Toro, a Chilean activist facing deportation; and Larry Holmes, BOPM organizer. The Fruit of Labor Cultural Singers—also Black Workers For Justice members from North Carolina—performed several songs.

Plenary co-moderators were Leilani Clark and Larry Hales, Fight Imperialism-Stand Together youth organizers; Sharon Black, a BOPM activist from Baltimore; and Teresa Gutierrez, a May 1st Coalition organizer.

Four breakout discussion groups took place focused on reaching out to youth and students; uniting community and political issues; organizing labor in the South, immigrant workers, the unorganized, the unemployed and prisoners; and connecting the struggles against wars abroad with the struggles at home. Activists talked about local issues they are involved with and expressed suggestions for the working document draft put forth by the BOPM.

Breakout reportbacks were given by Nadir Hilmi, a Palestinian youth organizer; health care activist Ajamu Sankofa; Joyce Chediac; and labor organizers Phebe Eckfeldt and Joe Piette.

The document, which is a work in progress, was adopted by the conference. Go to www.workers.org to see videos of the plenary talks at the Workers.TV section.

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WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Fruit of Labor singers, Jan. 17 in NYC. Left to right, Calvin Glover, Nathanette Mayo, Erin Byrd, Rick Scott and Angaza Laughinghouse.

Republic's workers stand for fightback

The following message was read at Jan. 17 NYC Fightback meeting:

The members of UE Local 1110, workers from Republic Windows and Doors, stand with you in demanding a people's bailout. Corporations got bailed out, we got sold out. It is time we held corporations and our government accountable for the economic hardships we are suffering.

Whether it is foreclosures or evictions, layoffs or plant closings, this is a moment in history where people need to resist, organize and fight back. We hope our struggle shows what can be won when people unite and stand up. We hope many more are now motivated to carry the struggle for economic and social justice forward.

Best wishes for a successful and productive meeting.

In solidarity,

**Your brothers and sisters
from UE Local 1110, Chicago** □

Life under capitalism

Child poverty grows in Michigan

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

The U.S.-backed Israeli war on Gaza has become infamous for the number of civilian Palestinians it has killed or wounded, especially children. Pictures and videos of wounded, maimed and murdered children in Gaza have horrified and elicited the outrage, compassion and solidarity of millions worldwide.

The class war waged everyday by the capitalists against the workers and the oppressed is not confined, however, to hot wars of military domination and imperialist subjugation around the world. Other, more insidious forms of oppression are visited upon the majority of people everyday, including here in the U.S.

Take unemployment and poverty. These are the end result of capitalism for

Bail Out the People document: A guide to action

Following are excerpts from a Bail Out the People Movement draft document adopted at the Jan. 17 Fightback Conference in NYC. The paper outlines a plan of action including International Women's Day; Wall Street actions on April 3 and 4; May Day; a march on Washington, D.C., in the fall, along with a People's Assembly; support for the March 21 March on the Pentagon; as well as the need to build an army of organizers for the coming battles. The document can be read in its entirety at www.bailoutpeople.org.

In 2009, more and more lives are going to be devastated by the biggest global economic crisis since the depression of the 1930s. This crisis is the challenge of a lifetime for those of us who have made a commitment to fighting for the rights of people. What we do or fail to do will prove decisive in the coming battle over whose interests in society shall prevail.

Part of the legacy of Dr. King is the understanding that **no** election or president—however historical and inspiring—can be a substitute for a mass movement in the struggle against war or for social and economic rights.

The following draft program is a work in progress. It does not address every issue and concern. Like the Fightback—it will grow: A real jobs program that guarantees either a union wage job or income to all; an immediate moratorium on foreclosures,

evictions, layoffs, utility shut-offs and prison construction; an indefinite extension of unemployment benefits; expand unemployment insurance to all who are unemployed; no cutbacks in social programs including tuition hikes and public transportation fare hikes; health care for all, no privatization; stop all federal raids, arrests and deportations of undocumented workers; reconstruction in the Gulf Coast; fight for right of return of Katrina/Rita survivors guided by a people's elected reconstruction authority; prosecute racist killer police and set up civilian police accountability boards; a cleanup now of communities impacted by environmental racism and establish elected environmental control authorities; support anti-war GIs and veterans' organizations' demands including those for health care, benefits and jobs. □

the workers and oppressed, who have the value of their labor power stolen by the bosses in the form of profits. The working class bears the brunt of mass layoffs, plant, office and store closings, ever-higher unemployment, budget cuts, increasing foreclosures and homelessness, and other by-products of the capitalist crisis. Every city, town and rural area in the U.S. is affected.

In Michigan, a state wracked by a severe economic downturn for the last decade, children are more and more becoming the victims of this crisis.

A report issued Jan. 13 by Kids Count in Michigan, a collaboration of Michigan's Children and the Michigan League for Human Services, stated: "Michigan's continuing economic woes are spilling over into the lives of the state's youngest residents with nearly one out of every

four young children (under age 5) living in poverty. That means for a family of four, income is no more than about \$21,000 [annually]. Two out of every five young children live in low-income households, defined as income under \$42,000 for a family of four."

The Kids Count report indicates a whopping 40 percent increase in child poverty in Michigan from 2000 to 2007, rising from 13.6 to 19 percent.

Racism and national oppression factor hugely in child poverty: "The risk of poverty ... disproportionately afflicts children in minority communities. Young African-American children in Michigan were three times more likely to be living in families with income below the federal poverty level than their white counterparts. Almost half (44 percent) of the

Continued on page 10

Building solidarity at Stella D’oro

By Mike Eilenfeldt
Bronx, N.Y.

Wet snow flurries greeted a seasoned band of heroic Stella D’oro production workers who stood shoulder to shoulder with their community supporters on the picket line. They were in front of the Bronx plant gate at 237th Street in the shadow of the Broadway elevated local train.

Hand painted signs hanging high on a chain link fence called for a boycott of Stella D’oro cookies. Workers held umbrellas and placards reading “On strike” and signed by Local 50 Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers.

Elevated trains rumbling overhead periodically drowned out speeches and chants but not the solidarity of the workers who on Jan. 10 were beginning their fifth month outside the gates. Chants of “Boycott Stella!” and “No contract, no cookies!” warmed up the picket line.

Community supporters carried posters demanding “Boycott Stella D’oro products made by scabs.” They distributed boycott leaflets calling for a solidarity march on Jan. 31.

No Stella D’oro worker has joined the scab crew hired by Brynwood Partners. The Connecticut-based private equity vulture bought Stella D’oro from Kraft in 2006. Brynwood imposed extremely degrading demands, and then walked out of contract negotiations last Aug. 13, provoking the strike.

The Brynwood bosses want to establish a multitier work force by freezing the wages of some workers and cutting wages of many Latina women employees who have less specialized training, by 25 percent, while raising wages for a few workers with special training. Brynwood plans to viciously slash benefits, including holidays and sick days, replace a guaranteed union pension with risky individual 401K plans, and increase employee contributions to health insurance.

Strikers told Workers World that the Brynwood Partners’ bosses are expert at union busting but know nothing about cookies. Brynwood is unable to hire scabs from the Kingsbridge community in the Bronx because people in the community identify with the mostly Latina workers on strike.

Many of the 135 workers have labored 15 to 30 years at the factory, investing their very lives in Stella D’oro. Workers chanted, “We are Stella!” as they marched to the Stop & Shop mall at 240th Street and Broadway, where community supporters went inside to hand out boycott leaflets.

Republic Windows & Doors workers in Chicago, who had occupied their factory in December, sent a message of solidarity. Struggle had taught them that Stella D’oro workers are making a great contribution to the labor movement by standing up to bosses who intend to squeeze the working class to raise profit margins.

Bronx Councilman Tony Avela pledged to ask fellow City Council

members to sign a letter of protest to Brynwood Partners in support of the Stella D’oro workers. Avela thanked strikers for “standing up not only for your rights, but for workers’ rights.”

Charles Jenkins of Local 10 Transport Workers Union said, “We know that it’s hard and we want to be able to galvanize more support. It’s important for workers to hear your story.”

Teresa Gutierrez of the May 1st Coalition joined the picket line and marched with the workers to Shop & Save, where boycott leaflets were distributed. Judy Gonzalez and Eddie “Chungo” Molina of the Committee in Support of the Stella D’oro Workers handed out leaflets. Judy urged the store manager to remove Stella D’oro cookies from his shelves.

Gonzalez read a letter from the committee that said that business had been booming for Brynwood Partners. “Workers should be sharing in the growing revenues,” not standing in the cold through the holiday season. Gonzalez and supporters will leaflet customers outside other Kingsbridge stores to encourage them to join the boycott and demand that store managers remove Stella D’oro cookies from their shelves.

Committee members are expanding the boycott into Manhattan. To help build the boycott, see the Web site www.stelladorostrike2008.com for contact information.

A march down Broadway will be held Jan. 31 at 2 p.m. Take the 1 train to 238th and Broadway.

ON THE PICKET LINE
By Sue Davis

House passes two pay-equity bills

On Jan. 9 the new House of Representatives passed two bills promoting pay equity for women. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act counters the reactionary 2007 Supreme Court decision that severely limited the period when women could sue for job discrimination. The bill allows a woman to sue with each new paycheck based on a past discriminatory pay rate.

The Paycheck Fairness Act strengthens the 1963 Equal Pay Act requiring equal pay for equal work. (New York Times, Jan. 10) According to a recent study by the Center for American Progress, women earn approximately \$434,000 less on average than men over a 40-year period. While today women average 78 cents for every dollar a man earns, that doesn’t take into account that both women and men of color earn significantly less than white men.

A report from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research found that if women were paid fairly, single women’s income would rise by 13.4 percent, single mothers would earn 17 percent more, and married women’s income would increase by 6 percent. These wage increases would reduce poverty levels for single mothers by over 50 percent.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers are lobbying senators to oppose both bills. Stay tuned.

ILWU supports Cuban Five

Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union in San Francisco sent a letter Jan. 15 to President-elect Barack Obama in support of the Cuban Five. ILWU President Melvin Mackay asked Obama to look into the case of the Five and allow visas for the spouses of Gerardo Hernández and René González. Mackay writes: “We appeal to your sense of justice and ask you to act immediately to put an end to this travesty of justice. We know that if you learn about the case, you will understand that the Cuban Five are innocent. We as a nation would do anything to defend ourselves against terrorism. For doing precisely that, the Cuban Five have already spent 10 years in prison; it is time for them to return home to their families in Cuba. Until then we ask you to intervene to grant visas to Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez to visit their husbands in prison.” To read the entire letter, go to laborexchange.blogspot.com.

Sign petition supporting EFCA

The Employee Free Choice Act is at the top of organized labor’s agenda in 2009. The law would make it easier for workers to join unions. If a majority of workers signed cards authorizing a union, they wouldn’t need to hold an election, where bosses all too often intimidate, harass and threaten workers to vote against a union. President Obama has promised to sign the EFCA, while the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is waging war against it. It’s up to everyone who favors workers’ right to bargain collectively to push for passage of this bill. To sign a petition supporting EFCA, go to <http://freechoiceact.org/aft>.

Wal-Mart to pay \$352-\$640 million over wage violations

In agreeing to what’s called the largest settlement covering wage violations, Wal-Mart, the world’s largest, multibillion-dollar (anti-union) retailer, agreed on Dec. 23 to pay at least \$352 million, and as much as \$640 million, to settle 63 lawsuits pending in federal and state courts in 42 states. All suits charged Wal-Mart with forcing employees to work off the clock; now only 12 wage-and-hour lawsuits are still pending. (New York Times, Dec. 24) What a difference passage of the EFCA would mean to the thousands of Wal-Mart workers in the U.S., in addition to the millions in linked industries around the world, who would finally be able to negotiate decent contracts.

Proud day for union labor!

What hasn’t been reported in the corporate press is that the heroic workers who joined together to save the lives of 155 passengers and crew on board US Airways Flight 1549 on Jan. 15 were all union workers. The pilots, flight attendants, air traffic controllers, ferryboat crews and firefighters all belong to unions that stress safety and service. (alternet.org, Jan. 16) Only union labor could have pulled off such a “miracle.” □

Transit workers & subway riders join forces

By Tony Murphy
New York

Outrage has been the public response to projected New York City subway fare hikes. Despite the corporate media trying to make it seem like the hikes are inevitable, anger has been growing. From the streets to the limited public forums provided by the Metropolitan Transit Authority, that anger is beginning to gel into a movement.

In December, Bail Out the People Movement member Stephen Millies disrupted the MTA board meeting by emulating Muntadar al-Zaidi, the Iraqi journalist who threw his shoe at George W. Bush.

BOPM members joined forces with members of Transit Workers Union Local 100 to hold a “People’s Public Hearing” on the sidewalk outside the New York Hilton when the MTA recently held its first public hearing about the fare hikes.

One hundred people, about a fifth of them transit workers, gathered an hour before the hearing—in weather that hovered below 20 degrees—to protest the proposed MTA budget. Then they marched inside, chanting “No fare hikes! No way! Let the banks pay!”

The MTA forum was jammed to standing-room-only capacity in a ballroom that could seat 700 people. The format was organized around three-minute comments at a microphone for a handful of politicians and people who had called weeks before



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

to preregister.

Hundreds in the crowd jeered at the roll call of the 17 MTA board members’ names as they were introduced at the start of the program. Then they booed and heckled the MTA board members who tried to speak.

Weeks before the hearing, BOPM members and transit workers leafleted subway stations about the demonstration and hearing, getting some media coverage in the process. “We’re not just going to take these cuts and these booth closings without a fight,” Transit Workers Union member

Marvin Holland told cable news station NY1 as he leafleted the Rector Street subway station the Thursday before the demonstration. “And we want the public to come out and fight with us,” Holland said.

The sidewalk People’s Public Hearing was led and chaired by TWU member Charles Jenkins. Among those who spoke were student Carina Nieves from LaGuardia College; Brenda Stokeley of the Million Worker March; Larry Hales of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST); and Larry Holmes of BOPM. □

There is no question that an emergency jobs program, which would involve the immediate direct hiring of millions of workers at living wages, with benefits, and a freeze on layoffs, is urgently needed to stave off the growing crisis of the working class and the oppressed people.

Emergency jobs program needed

By Fred Goldstein

The record wave of layoffs that seemed to peak in December is continuing into 2009.

At the same time, hundreds of billions of dollars in aid are flowing from Washington to the banks and corporations, not to the unemployed. Reviving corporate profits has taken precedence over providing desperately needed jobs or calling for an immediate end to foreclosures and evictions.

Circuit City announced it is laying off 34,000 workers by the end of March—the largest mass firing since the current crisis began. This second-largest electronic retailer in the U.S. is closing 557 stores.

Just in the first two weeks of this year a series of other layoffs has been announced.

Motorola, which laid off 3,000 workers last October, has announced another 4,000 jobs will be cut. Hertz announced 4,000 jobs will go worldwide. ConocoPhillips will lay off 1,350, Pfizer 2,400, WellPoint 1,500, Saks 1,000 and Neiman Marcus 375. Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), Blue Cross/Blue Shield and other large companies are also scheduled to announce new rounds of layoffs.

These are only the most publicized firings.

The official unemployment rate, which was 7.2 percent at the end of 2008, is expected to shoot up rapidly in the coming months as the bosses continue the onslaught without mercy.

However, there is a less publicized but also official figure called “total” unemployment—and it has reached 13.4 percent. The first thing to remember about this figure is that it amounts to 20 million workers. It includes people who couldn’t get anything but part-time work when they need to work full time, plus the millions who have stopped looking altogether, termed “discouraged” workers.

At the present rate, millions more will lose their jobs in the coming months. Last year 2.6 million lost their jobs—a huge number but still deceptively low when trying to project what will happen this year because, of the 2.6 million, 2 million lost their jobs just in the last four months of 2008.

There is no question that an emergency jobs program, which would involve the immediate direct hiring of millions of workers at living wages, with benefits, and a freeze on layoffs, is urgently needed to stave off the growing crisis of the working class and the oppressed people.

However, instead of reaching out directly to assist the workers who are suffering from the capitalist crisis, Washington and Wall Street are reaching out to bolster the

capitalist system and aid the capitalists who caused the crisis in the first place.

Why ‘stimulus’ can’t work

Wall Street told the incoming Obama administration to get hold of the \$350 billion fund Congress passed to bail out the banks and use it to clean up their bad loans. In addition, the Democrats have submitted an \$825 billion “stimulus” package.

There are many progressive features to the package, such as increases in Pell grants, reduction of payroll taxes for workers, rural assistance, additional food stamp aid and unemployment insurance. But these features, including the declared goal of creating 3 million jobs in the next two years, are utterly inadequate to meet the massive crisis that is unfolding at a rapid rate.

The package calls for \$550 billion in direct spending over two years. Some 90 percent of this spending will go through private capitalists. The bill sets up contract procedures and deadlines that range from one year to more than two years for fulfillment. It has no mandatory hiring or wage requirements, save a nebulous “prevailing wage” stipulation. There is no requirement to stabilize employment by requiring that workers be retained for any period of time, nor any funds to provide such stability.

The 20 million workers already considered unemployed or underemployed—and this December figure is sure to rise in the new year—will have to wait for the stimulus package to go into effect. When it does, they will then have to compete for an estimated 1.5 million jobs to be created this year while the government bureaucracies at the local, state and federal levels negotiate contracts with competing capitalist interests and their lobbyists seeking to get a piece of the pie.

None of these bosses has the goal of providing good jobs at living wages with benefits. To them, the goal is to revive and maximize profits.

The entire process is corrupt, agonizingly slow, and totally uncertain as far as the workers are concerned. Furthermore, whatever hiring these bosses do could be cancelled out within a year or less by the drying up of funds or shrinking of the market.

The working class and the communities have no other recourse but to begin organizing on a mass basis to demand jobs now—at living wages.

Need for a direct jobs program

Millions are already unemployed. Millions more face layoffs unless an immediate, direct jobs program is put in place. It can be done. During the Great

Depression of the 1930s, government jobs were put in place within two weeks after job programs were set up.

It won’t happen automatically. “Jobs or income” must become a mass demand, backed up by mobilizations, jobs marches and organizing the unemployed, in unity with the employed, who also need the security of jobs or income.

Regarding the bank bailout fund, \$20 billion in cash and \$100 billion in government-absorbed losses have been promised to Bank of America, which had already received \$25 billion earlier. Citicorp is expected to announce \$10 billion in new losses, which the government will absorb. Citigroup has already received \$45 billion in bailout money and the government has given it a guaranteed backup of \$300 billion to cover problematic loans.

The \$350 billion bailout doesn’t include these huge new backup commitments. Its goal is to make the banks solvent by dealing with hundreds of billions—the investment bank Goldman Sachs says it’s more like \$1 trillion—of remaining bad loans.

The fact is that these bad loans on the books of the banks are for the most part a mirror image of the suffering of the masses. Why are the loans of Citicorp, Bank of America and other banks going bad? Because of credit card defaults, auto loan defaults, student loan defaults, mortgage loan defaults and every other kind of unpayable debt. As people lose their jobs, have their wages and salaries cut, lose their health care, etc., they sink deeper and deeper into debt.

The bankers and the rich investors behind them are losing paper wealth, but their “balance sheet” problems arise from the direct material suffering of the masses. The working class and the middle class are unable to pay their bills, are losing their homes, their cars, their electricity and gas, their health coverage and every other means of survival.

Banks don’t lend when markets are glutted

The handout to the banks is being justified as an attempt to get them to start lending to companies and consumers, which will then get the economy rolling again. But this is a complete fiction. The problem of lending arises not from arbitrary stubbornness by the bankers. It arises from the lack of opportunity of the banks and the corporations to make profit once a crisis of capitalist overproduction hits, with its rising inventories and falling sales leading to falling production. After all, the bankers are in business to make profit.

The term “overproduction” has nothing to do with whether people need goods. It is when more commodities have been produced than can be marketed—

i.e., sold at a profit.

The crude facts of capitalist overproduction are obvious. The U.S. auto industry has gone from producing 16 million cars annually to 13.2 million last year, and is expected to drop to 12 million or less this year. Steel production, which is a barometer of the economy, dropped from 2 million tons in November to 1 million tons in December. In recent decades, hundreds of thousands of steel workers were laid off as the industry consolidated and shrunk itself. Now, overproduction has hit again. It is estimated that 20,000 steel workers will be laid off in the coming period.

The overproduction of housing and the consequent crisis in the construction industry and all its ancillary industries is getting worse with each foreclosure.

Giant technology companies like Motorola, Nortel, AMD and Intel are suffering losses due to overproduction and hence executing layoffs. Under those conditions, the banks see no profit in lending, no matter how much money the government hands them.

In fact, they are using their bailout money not for lending but to strengthen themselves financially. According to a New York Times survey of two dozen banks, “The overwhelming majority saw the bailout program as a no-strings-attached windfall that could be used to pay down debt, acquire other businesses or invest for the future.”

At a recent conference at the Palm Beach Ritz-Carlton, “Bankers mingled with investment analysts at an ocean-front luxury hotel, where the agenda featured evening cocktails by the pool and a golf outing at a nearby country club.” They were there to discuss the bailout funds. Referring to the government’s Troubled Asset Relief Program, conference organizer John C. Hope III, chairperson of the Whitney National Bank of New Orleans, said, “We see TARP as an insurance policy.” Hope figures that, “No matter how bad it gets, we’re going to be one of the remaining banks.” (New York Times, Jan. 18)

So much for lending, job creation and recovery.

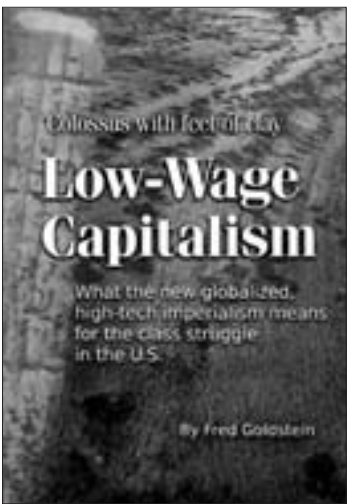
The “crisis” of the bankers and bosses is calmly discussed at luxury watering holes, while the workers are suffering the greatest attack in three generations.

The only way to get a real working-class recovery program is to organize to shake up the entire capitalist system until the bosses are forced to provide jobs and/or a livable income.

Goldstein is author of the recently published book, “Low-Wage Capitalism: Colossus with Feet of Clay,” which can be ordered through www.lowwagecapitalism.com.

“Lucid, deeply accurate and informative, as relevant and useful as a book can be, Goldstein offers a compelling analysis of the exploitative world of global corporate capitalism.”

– Michael Parenti,
author of *Contrary Notions*



www.LowWageCapitalism.com

Low-Wage Capitalism

Timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval. The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world’s workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.

- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
 - The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.
- Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

LETTER FROM LEONARD PELTIER

'I can still read the writing on the wall'

Editor's note: U.S. political prisoner Leonard Peltier has just been transferred from prison in Lewisburg to a federal lockup in Canaan. Both are in Pennsylvania. His supporters had tried urgently to get Peltier transferred to a prison somewhere closer to his family, specifically on Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota. Below are excerpts from a letter Peltier delivered by telephone on Jan. 12. The message can be read in its entirety at workers.org.

Greetings, my relatives, friends and/or captors:

I am in the process right now of being transferred; I had hoped to be transferred to a facility on the Turtle Mountain Reservation while I dealt with other legal issues regarding my imprisonment. My captors, however, have once again triumphed in their continuing efforts to break me. They have sent me even farther away from my traditional homeland. I hear them and others continually talk about justice.

One of the bureaucrats in North Dakota, when becoming aware of my efforts to be transferred to Turtle Mountain, spoke up and said he believed justice is being served in my continued imprisonment. I sincerely hope good people will take note of this person, Sen. Byron Dorgan, on the U.S. Senate Committee for Indian Affairs. It is quite obvious that he has no knowledge of true Indian history, no knowledge of my case, and is only a lackey for those who wish to keep us always subject to their version of what justice is.

They have at times called me a thug and a cold-blooded murderer, but I know historically they called Geronimo a cold-blooded murderer and savage; they called Crazy Horse a cold-blooded murderer and savage; they called Captain Jack of the Modocs a cold-blooded murderer and savage;

they called Black Hawk of the Sauk a cold-blooded murderer and savage; they called Tecumseh a cold-blooded murderer and savage; they called Sitting Bull a cold-blooded murderer and savage; and the list goes on and on.

The one thing all these men have in common is they were all imprisoned or killed by this government; they were all patriots in their own land, trying to stop the illegal, immoral taking of their people's land and resources.

I assume cold-blooded means you have no sense of right or wrong or something of that nature when you take a life. And if that is so, then this country is full of cold-blooded murderers and thugs because by proxy they have killed thousands of innocent men, women and children in Iraq and most recently in Afghanistan. I've seen them on TV. I've seen the pictures of children's bodies piled on top of each other. And right now the U.S. funds Israel's war machine as they kill hundreds of innocent men, women and children in Gaza.

This nation had better start paying attention. It is financially bankrupt at this point. It is spiritually and morally bankrupt.

I will speak out always against the coldblooded atrocities that are caused directly by military weapons and/or political policies that cause people to take their own lives, as in my country and other countries around the world. And though my vision may be failing me somewhat, I can still read the writing on the wall.

**Mitakuye Oyasmin
(All My Relations)**

Leonard Peltier

PS. I also want to take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank all those who wrote the prison recently on my behalf seeking my transfer to Turtle Mountain facility in North Dakota. Thank you. □



Peace on earth in 2009? U.S., Israel say, 'No thanks'

By Dolores Cox

Parallels exist between the establishments of the U.S. and Israel. The U.S. was founded by European settlers who stole the land of Indigenous people who had resided on it for thousands of years. Israel was established and carved out of Palestine, a land already occupied by people who had lived there for thousands of years.

The U.S. and Israel have both demonstrated their unwillingness to peacefully coexist with Indigenous peoples. What they can't obtain by coercion and intimidation they take by military force.

Both Native Americans and Palestinians have been victims of terrorists obsessed with capitalistic greed and imperialist domination. The U.S. and Israel have been beating their chests Tarzan-style in a war against Gaza, militarily and through starvation.

The Native American Holocaust began in 1492 with the arrival of Europeans. (The Black Holocaust of millions of enslaved Africans began shortly afterwards). The Palestinian Catastrophe was ominously foreshadowed by the U.S./British-backed garrison state of Israel in 1948 that led to the systematic, brutal eviction of the Palestinians from their homeland.

Just as "settlers" increasingly encroached upon Native American land, Israel has progressively and steadfastly annexed Palestinian land, Pac-Man style, during the past 60 years. While the newly built, enormous U.S. Embassy in Iraq shows the U.S.'s plan is to stay there, Israel has shown all along no intention of leaving occupied Palestinian territories.

The ideology of white supremacy is a basic premise upon which the occupiers operate. This has led to unspeakable, atrocious and heinous crimes against their victims. This racist doctrine rejects the right of Native Americans and Palestinians to self-determination, the right to return to their lands, and even the right to exist.

Not seeing the victims as human beings allows supremacists to indiscriminately bomb, attack and massacre them. Native Americans were sold into slavery, and their

land was forcefully taken to make room for settlers to help lay the basis for the expansion of capitalism into the West and more cotton plantations. Annihilation was seen as a solution to "the Indian problem."

Relegation of Native Americans to Indian reservations and oppressive control resembles Israel's confinement of Palestinians to Gaza refugee and concentration camps.

COMMENTARY

Both Palestinian and U.S. Indigenous people have been economically, socially, psychologically and politically persecuted, under the guise of "protecting settlers," national security, self-defense, spreading democracy or "national interest" and as a justification for wars. Such is the arrogance of imperialist power.

Israel and its apologists cynically use the horrors of the Nazi holocaust to justify their crimes against the Palestinian people, who had absolutely no responsibility for what happened in Nazi Germany. It's similar to the U.S. blaming Iraq for the Sept. 11 attack and then bombing that country and occupying it for almost six years.

Israel's claims of desiring and attempting to broker peace agreements are just as insincere as the false peace treaties made between U.S. government and Native American nations. U.S. philosophy was that treaties were meant to be broken. Myths and lies have characterized propaganda emanating from both Israel and the U.S.

Both governments ignore and invert historical truths. Each refuses to acknowledge or take responsibility for the consequences of their actions on the lives of their victims, commonly employing the strategy of blaming the victim. Each labels people who resist, defend themselves, and struggle for peace, freedom and justice as "terrorists." And each uses it as justification for carte blanche aggression towards them.

Even if the U.S. and Israel don't consider the war against the people of Gaza as a crime against humanity, the reality on the ground is stark and speaks for itself. The facts are the facts. So, speaking truth to power must continue, as well as the fight for liberation. □

Jews in solidarity with Palestine

By Shelley Ettinger

As the world watched the continuing Israeli bombing and invasion of Gaza in horror, as angry protests continued around the globe, a group of Jewish people inside the U.S. took a public stand in support of the Palestinian people and against the Zionist settler state.

A Jan. 14 statement issued by the International Action Center on behalf of "Jews in Solidarity with Palestine" said: "No to Israel! Yes to self-determination, democracy and freedom! Stop the U.S.-backed genocidal Israeli war on Gaza! Stop U.S. funding of the war on Palestine!"

The statement, signed by an initial list of 53 people, says Israel's war on Gaza "reflects the program of the Israeli settler state—which is based on the theft of Palestine, the ouster and suppression of the Palestinian people, and the racist ideology of Zionism." It continues: "It's not enough to oppose the bombing. It's not enough to demand an end to the 41-year occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.



PHOTO: ROBERT LOWDEN

Jewish group shuts Israeli Consulate in Los Angeles to stop slaughter in Gaza.

"We stand in complete and unconditional support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people. This includes the right to return to Palestine, from the river to the sea, and the right to democratically determine the form and future of the Palestinian state."

The JSP statement calls the creation of Israel "a crime [that] betrayed the whole history of the Jewish people," noting that

"from helping topple the czar in Russia and build the unions in New York, to resisting pogroms and fighting to the last breath in the Warsaw Ghetto, opposition to persecution, oppression and racism was central to the Jewish heritage."

It calls on "Jewish people around the world, including those inside Israel, to join us in reclaiming that heritage. Reject racism and genocide. Reject the Zionist state,

the very concept of which is racist to the core. Take the hand of our Palestinian sisters and brothers. Defend their righteous struggle to restore their stolen land and build a democratic Palestine."

The appeal struck an immediate chord. Hundreds of people responded within hours of the statement going public. In three days, over 1,100 people had added their names as signers or endorsed the JSP statement. The names are still pouring in.

The signers include a survivor of the Nazi holocaust, a child of holocaust survivors, a 1933 refugee from Hitler Germany, and even a resident of an Israeli kibbutz. Messages of support and thanks from non-Jews also arrived.

Jewish actions vs. Israel

The JSP statement and the strong response to it are one indication that the Zionist state's longtime lock on Jewish loyalty is no longer absolute. Anguished and shamed by the horrors of U.S.-backed Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people,

Continued on the next page

African Americans & the Palestine solidarity struggle

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Although many people within the United States, from various nationalities and cultures, have expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people since Israeli aerial bombardment of Gaza started on Dec. 27, the bourgeoisie stills refuses to allow an open debate around the question of an independent state for this oppressed people. At the same time the ruling elites have set out to shape political opinion in favor of imperialist aims in the Middle East.

One key tactic in the ruling-class effort to build support for imperialist aims in the Middle East is to openly solicit collaboration between African-American political and religious leaders and the state of Israel. During the early phase of the bombing of Gaza by the Israeli Air Force, the Detroit City Council president, Monica Conyers, traveled to Israel to supposedly study the conflict in occupied Palestine.

In 2008, a well-known African-American minister, Kenneth Flowers, pastor of the Greater New Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Detroit, was invited to Israel in order to receive a “Martin Luther King” award. Flowers took a delegation of several African Americans with him on the trip to Israel, which included the president of the Detroit-Metro AFL-CIO, Sandra Williams.

Other examples of these efforts to influence African Americans to support the settler-colonial state of Israel include the public postures of other ministers such as Bishop Keith Butler of the Word of Faith Ministries, which has hosted public meetings in support of Israel. Other supporters of the state of Israel include the Christian Television Network (CTN), headed by Rev. Glenn Plummer, who openly speaks in favor of the Zionist regime and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

In two Congressional votes on a nonbinding resolution endorsing the Israeli genocidal onslaught against the Palestinian people on Jan. 8 and 9, the U.S. Senate voted unanimously in support of the Zionist military program against the Palestinians. In the House of Representatives, after Speaker Nancy Pelosi had, at the beginning of the aerial

ple, more Jewish people are rethinking their support for Israel.

In Los Angeles on Jan. 13, a group of Jewish activists blockaded the Israeli Consulate to protest the Gaza atrocities. They chained themselves together and blocked access to the building.

An open letter from Jewish people to Israeli soldiers is circulating worldwide. It characterizes Israel’s operation in Gaza as a war crime and calls on the soldiers to refuse orders to take part.

Another letter, signed by 78 Jewish people, primarily academics, in England, says, “The time for appeasing Israel is long past,” and demands, “Britain must withdraw the British ambassador to Israel and, as with apartheid South Africa, embark on a program of boycott, divestment and sanctions.”

Inside Israel, another protest against the Gaza war was set for Jan. 17 in Tel Aviv, and some Israeli troops and officers, known as “refuseniks,” have resisted duty in Gaza.

Find more information on the petition at iacenter.org at the headline, “Jews in Solidarity with Palestine,” under the header: “Massacre in Gaza.”



Cynthia McKinney was a passenger on the Dignity vessel, carrying desperately needed medical aid which was denied entry into Gaza by the Israeli Navy. The Dignity was hit and damaged by the Israeli military forces. McKinney, in subsequent interviews, stated that she felt her life was in danger during the ordeal with the Israeli Navy. Undeterred, she maintains her support for the right of self-determination for the people of Palestine. Seen here, the rescued ship as it is brought into a Lebanese port.

bombardments, expressed unconditional support for the state of Israel and its military assault on the Palestinian people, only five members voted against a resolution similar to the one passed by the Senate.

Among the approximately 40 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, only two voted in opposition to the resolution supporting Israel. Yet, despite these efforts to influence the elected political leadership and selected African-American religious figures, most working-class and poor Black people in the U.S. oppose the government’s hostility toward the Palestinian people.

This defiance can be traced back to the period of the rising civil rights and Black liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The most advanced political elements within these movements saw a direct relationship between the national oppression suffered by people in the U.S. and the struggles of the Palestinians and other colonized people in other parts of the Middle East and the world.

A history of solidarity from Malcolm X to Cynthia McKinney

One of the major conflicts that would shape and define the post-World War II period was the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the resulting displacement and occupation of the Palestinian people. Interestingly enough, one African American, Ralph Bunche, a Harvard-educated political scientist, was intimately involved in the imperialist machinations that lead to the creation of the Israeli regime, despite his own misgivings about the creation of the state of Israel and how harmful he knew it would be for Palestinians.

By the 1960s, revolutionary African-American leaders such as Malcolm X, through his involvement in the Nation of Islam and the later Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), openly criticized Zionism as a political philosophy and expressed solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinians and the Arab national liberation movements throughout the region.

In an article published by Malcolm X on Sept. 17, 1964, in the Egyptian Gazette, he pointed out that the Zionist regime in Palestine served U.S. imperialist aims in the Middle East and Africa.

After the assassination of Malcolm X in February 1965, the youth elements within the civil rights movement became more radicalized. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) issued a statement in opposition to the U.S. war

against Vietnam in January 1966, becoming the first major civil rights organization to openly call for the end of the war and the elimination of the draft.

In 1967, during the Arab-Israeli so-called “Six Day War” in June, SNCC took a position in support of Egypt and the other Arab states, as well as the Palestinians. The organization came under fire once again for opposing U.S. foreign policy.

James Forman, who in 1967 served as the international affairs director for SNCC, wrote in his political autobiography, “We were too radical then, for not supporting domestic policies of the administration, and we were too radical now—for opposing American foreign policy, for seeing Israel as an imperialist power in the service of, and serving, that policy.” (“The Making of Black Revolutionaries,” Forman, p. 496)

Another SNCC leader, Stokely Carmichael (later known as Kwame Ture), delivered a major address at the Organization of Arab Students conference held at the University of Michigan in August 1968. In this speech, Carmichael reiterated the organization’s position in support of the Palestinian struggle and also discussed the role of Zionist ideology inside the U.S.

Carmichael said, “What makes the forces of Zionism so effective in their propaganda is that the Zionists have something else: not only do they assert theirs as a fact, and anyone who questions it they put on the defensive by calling him anti-Semitic, but the Zionists hook up the killing of six million Jews as a justification for the so-called state of Israel.

“They say, ‘Six million Jews were murdered by Hitler; we have a right to Israel.’ And that is a very dangerous thing. It is a fact that six million Jews were slaughtered by Hitler, but that six million Jews were murdered by Hitler does not give the Zionists the right to take Arab land.” (Stokely Speaks, 1971, 2007, p. 137)

This position in support of the Palestinian struggle was also adopted by other revolutionary organizations such as the Black Panther Party and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. By the late 1970s, even more centrist African-American leaders sought to intervene in resolving the Palestinian question.

Even the former United Nations ambassador for the U.S. under the Carter administration, Andrew Young, who was a former civil rights leader who worked alongside Martin Luther King Jr. in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), was removed from his position in the Carter administration in large part because

of his efforts to open up dialogue with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at the U.N.

In the aftermath of the removal of Andrew Young in 1979, another civil rights leader who had also worked with Dr. King, Rev. Jesse Jackson, took a trip to the region and developed a position calling for dialogue with the Palestinians.

With the advent of Barack Obama’s candidacy for president in 2008, the senator from Illinois went to great lengths not only to express his support for the pro-Israeli position, as reflected in his major address at the American-Israeli Political Action Committee conference in early 2008, but also to stay clear of any substantive discussion involving the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and statehood. Obama has surrounded himself with pro-Israeli aides, including his secretary of state, former Sen. Hillary Clinton, and his chief of staff, Rahm Emmanuel, who, according to news reports, served in the Israeli military.

In contrast, former U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney, who ran for president on the Green Party ticket in 2008, supported the Palestinian people as part of a solidarity delegation which sought to deliver aid to the people of Gaza, who had been under a blockade for months.

McKinney was a passenger on the Dignity vessel, which was denied entry into Gaza by the Israeli Navy. The Dignity was hit and damaged by the Israeli military forces. McKinney, in subsequent interviews, stated that she felt her life was in danger during the ordeal with the Israeli Navy. Undeterred, she maintains her support for the right of self-determination for the people of Palestine.

Solidarity with Palestine continues to grow

During the latest assault on Gaza, there has been a groundswell of support and sympathy in the U.S. for the Palestinian people, especially among African Americans and other oppressed national groups.

The Blacks Against Genocide Coalition issued a statement that read in part: “We, Black people in the United States, condemn the criminal Israeli attacks on the people of Gaza. These war crimes are being conducted with the overt material and unapologetic political backing of the U.S. government.

This statement continues by pointing out that “Most importantly, we have learned the lessons of four centuries of racist oppression in the Western hemisphere: that the liberation struggles of the oppressed must not be divided by language, geography, gender, religion or race; that if they come for Gaza in the morning, they will most certainly come for Harlem at night.”

African Americans and other oppressed sectors of the working class in the U.S. recognize that the deepening economic crisis is, at least in large part, a direct result of the militarism of U.S. imperialism. The ongoing wars of occupation in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Haiti have strengthened the repressive apparatus of the U.S.

Consequently, the liberation of African Americans and other oppressed peoples can only be won when imperialism is challenged and defeated in other parts of the world. Therefore, the defeat of imperialism in the so-called developing or third world countries will inevitably advance the struggle for the total liberation of the oppressed and working people inside the imperialist states. □



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WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

ML King Day turns toward Palestine

By Betsey Piette

In **Atlanta**, the annual Martin Luther King Day march, which highlights the role of unions, community organizations, churches and progressive groups, filled Atlanta’s major thoroughfare, Peachtree Street. Some of the signs read “End the War in Iraq? Yes, We Can!” “Justice for Troy Davis!” and “Bail Out the People!” The most numerous and loudest contingent was that of Palestinians and other opponents of the U.S.-backed Israeli massacre in Gaza.

Children, youth and adults waved flags, chanted nonstop and were warmly greeted by the largely African-American crowds gathered along the route. The lead banner included a quote from King, “Injustice Anywhere is a Threat to Justice Everywhere,” followed by the demand “Let Palestine Live!”

This year’s MLK Day in **Detroit** stressed the necessity of solidarity with the Palestinian people of Gaza. As a result of this demonstration of support, the Detroit MLK Committee invited three speakers from the Arab-American community.

Two Palestinian-American women, Hadil Katato and Hend Elomari, addressed the crowd by paying tribute to the anti-racist and anti-war legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Then, introduced by Barbara Harvey of Jewish Voice for Peace, Osama Siblani, the publisher of the Arab-American News, spoke.

In **New York City**, women and children led a march for justice in Gaza, entering Union Square chanting, “Gaza, Gaza don’t you cry! Palestine will never die!” The children led spirited chants in English and Arabic, raising fists and waving Palestinian flags.

As snow blanketed the city, over 3,000 people gathered for the Jan. 19 event, part of the national days of action in honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Rally co-chair Lamis Deek of Al-Awda introduced a young boy who at earlier demonstrations chanted to the crowd atop his



WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

father’s shoulders, calling him “the face of the resistance.” From his father’s arms, he shouted, “No Justice!” and the crowd responded “No Peace!”

In **Minneapolis** over 500 protesters braved bone-chilling weather to oppose the U.S.-Israeli war against Gaza. On a two-hour march a sea of Palestinian flags and cries of “Free, free Palestine!” and “No to U.S.-Israeli atrocities!” greeted shoppers, who expressed sympathy to the protesters’ message.

Hundreds gathered in **San Diego** on Jan.17 expressing outrage against the U.S.-funded, Israeli attacks. Messages of solidarity came from a number of community organizations. Gloria Verdieu, representing the International Action Center, read the statement by the Blacks Against Genocide Coalition condemning Israeli atrocities. Zahi Damuni, Al-Awda leader and protest organizer, warned the incoming Obama administration that it faced global condemnation unless it halted U.S./Israeli aggression in the Middle East.

Ten **Chicago** protestors face criminal trespassing charges after staging a sit-in Jan. 16 at the office of Sen. Dick Durbin, who has supported the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip. Protestors demanded a meeting with Durbin, insisting he speak out against the continuing Israeli assault on Gaza and call on Israel to open Gaza’s borders.

Maureen Murphy of the Palestine Solidarity Group stated, “We call on Senator Durbin to initiate legislation to investigate whether Israel is in violation of the

Arms Export Control Act of 1976.”

Chants of “No more blood, no more tears! It’s been over 60 years!” echoed through frigid night air as 300 people marched from the Israeli Consulate in **Philadelphia** through rush-hour traffic on Jan. 16. Arab and Muslim women and children led the “March of Mourning,” protesting indiscriminate killing of civilians in Gaza. Those in front walked in silence, carrying stretchers with toys, shoes and small mock shrouds. Despite a single-digit temperature the militant crowd ended the rally by throwing shoes at City Hall to protest U.S. government funding of Israel’s wars.

Commemorating the 80th birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Jan. 15, some 30 people backed up Black community leaders at a news conference at the busy downtown Federal Building in **Los Angeles**, where they condemned the U.S.-Israeli genocidal massacre in Gaza.

Speakers included Hank Jones of the San Francisco 8, and representatives from the Black UCLA student organization ASAP, Global Women’s Strike, All African People’s Revolutionary Party, KPFK radio and the International Action Center. They demanded that President-elect Barack Obama and Black elected officials in Congress meet their historical obligations of fighting injustice by ending their silent complicity and work towards ending all aid to Israel.

In **Woodstock**, N.Y., at the 19th Annual Tribute to Dr. King, Rev. Modele Clark spoke on the significance of the election on King Day, noting, “Obama is stepping through a door left ajar by Martin Luther King Jr.”

Pam Africa of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal described the long struggle to free Mumia. Speaking on the capitalist system and the war in Gaza, she said, “It’s not what Obama’s gonna’ do. It’s what we’re gonna’ do!”

On King Day in **Cleveland**, 300 people braved icy winds off Lake Erie to march around the Justice Center, which houses the police department, courts and Cuyahoga County jail, protesting racial disparities in sentencing, police brutality and mistreatment in the jail. Inmates banged on their windows, held up lettered signs and waved clothing in solidarity with the march. A delegation from Cleveland’s Palestinian community participated in the protest and passed out information about Gaza.

Some 10,000 people participated in the annual Martin Luther King Day March in **Seattle**, pouring into the streets from Garfield High School. The theme was “Yes we can. Change begins now.” The march followed 22 workshops on community, national and international issues and a rally.

Black, Asian, Latino and white people in large numbers marched together. Unions and community groups were well represented. Signs protested threatened school closures, especially at the city’s only African-American academy. Three big banners demanded freedom for Palestine and an end to the U.S.-Israeli war against Gaza.

Some 100 supporters of Gaza braved the freezing cold to march in the annual King Parade in uptown **Charlotte, N.C.**, on Jan. 17. Support from the mainly African-American spectators along the route was overwhelming, particularly as marchers passed through The Square. On Jan. 19, some 50 people took to the streets in the upscale South Park area near Rep. Sue Myrick’s local office, demanding an Israeli pullout from Gaza.

Abayomi Azikiwe, Sharon Danann, Bob Dobrow, David Dixon, Stephanie Hedgecoke, Jill Hill, Dianne Mathiowetz, Jim McMahan, Bob McCubbin, Betsey Piette and Brenda Ryan contributed to this article.



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Anti-imperialists unite at Beirut Forum

By Bill Cecil
Beirut, Lebanon

As the people of Gaza staved off yet another attempt by the U.S.-armed and -funded Israeli military to eradicate the cause of Palestine by murdering its people, delegates from around the world gathered in Beirut to build solidarity and practical support for their cause among secular leftist and Islamic anti-imperialist forces.

As Dr. Ali Fayyad, the director of the Consultative Center for Studies and Documentation in Beirut, who hosted the Beirut Forum, laid out its goals: “In this part of the world the resistance is Islamic. The resistance movement here must introduce themselves to other forces of resistance to imperialism around the world. The ideological differences must be postponed. The resistance must prevail. ... An important goal of the forum is how, despite the ideological contradictions, to find how to work together hand in hand to achieve unity against imperialism.”

The Beirut International Forum for Resistance, Anti-Imperialism, Solidarity between Peoples and Alternatives, held from Jan. 16 to 18, assembled 400 delegates from all inhabited continents on the soil of Lebanon, where the U.S.-created Israeli war machine suffered its first strategic defeat at the hands of the Lebanese Resistance in 2006.

Besides the host group, also participating was the National Gathering to Support the Choice of Resistance (Lebanon), in collaboration with the International Campaign against American and Zionist Occupation (the Cairo Conference), the International Anti-Imperialist and Peoples’ Solidarity Forum (the Calcutta-India Conference) and the Stop War Campaign (London). Many hundreds of resistance organizations and prominent individuals endorsed the call for the Beirut Forum.

Manik Mukherjee, the secretary general of the International Anti-Imperialist and Peoples’ Solidarity Forum, who traveled for and worked on the Beirut Forum for the past year, headed an important delegation from India. The International League of People’s Struggle also participated.

The largest number of delegates came from the Arab world, including the Ba’ath and Communist Parties of Syria, and Iran, but there were also many from Latin America, including 30 from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Guests from Venezuela comprised members of parliament, unionists and youth from both the United Socialist Party (PSUV) and the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV).

From Europe, besides the collaborating groups, members of the Party Red of Norway, Odiario.info of Portugal, the Anti-Imperialist Camp, workers’ parties in Greece and Cyprus and many other anti-imperialists from around Europe attended.

Anti-war forces there from the U.S. included former Congressperson and presidential candidate Cynthia McKinney, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and delegations from the International Action Center and the Freedom Road Socialist Organization. McKinney was recently on the ship Dignity, which was rammed by the Israeli Navy while trying to bring medical aid to Gaza. Sara Flounders, IAC co-director, addressed the Palestine Plenary Session (WW publishes her talk in this issue).

Two camps in the world

“There are two camps in the world, that of imperialism, led by the United States, and that of resistance,” declared the Hezbollah deputy general secretary, Sheikh Naim Kassem, at the conference’s opening session. “And I think the resis-

tance camp will overcome.” He called on fighters for freedom and justice around the world to follow the example of the Lebanese resistance, where “We have united the leftists, with the secularist, the committed Muslim and the nationalist. ... We should join hands to form a pressing and effective force, regardless of color, ethnicity, language, religion or creed.”

Sheikh Kassem denounced Washington’s attempts to impose “a market economy” on other countries, saying, “People around the world find that their problems are caused by U.S intervention, and we should unite. But there is no solidarity without support of resistance. ... Gaza today is the symbol of resistance and human dignity. We call upon you to stand with Gaza to scatter the darkness of imperialism and Zionism.”

Speakers from Hamas, Gaza’s democratically elected governing party, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine drew rousing applause from all assembled as they described the horrific suffering and heroic resistance of Gaza’s people and called for political solidarity so that the people of Palestine would not lose diplomatically what they defended on the battlefield.

Panels and workshops combined political talks and action proposals with powerful personal testimony. Egyptian journalist Dalia Saladin described her visit to Gaza last January when freedom fighters forced open the Rafah crossing with Egypt. “Every household has at least one martyr and another disabled by the war. But when you walk among the people, you feel you have entered a new culture and a new social perspective, a culture of giving and sacrifice for others, where the poorest of the poor, especially mothers, set the example.”

A Lebanese man, Hussein Shokr, brought delegates to tears when he told how an Israeli missile had killed his wife

and four children during the 2006 war while he was away working in Canada.

Activists from Greece and Cyprus told of their efforts to break the blockade on Gaza physically and of how Greek dockworkers had refused to load U.S. arms bound for Israel.

In the conference closing session, Palestinian Resistance hero Leila Khaled of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) spoke of the “unilateral ceasefire” just announced by Israeli forces. “We salute all those who fight to break the siege of Gaza. We affirm that this victory was won by our freedom fighters on the ground. The unilateral ceasefire proves that, with all its destructive capacity, Israel could not achieve its goals on the battlefield. They are now seeking the help of the United States to achieve those goals politically. But we consider occupation to be an act of war. When injustice is law, resistance is duty. And the only answer to occupation is resistance and liberation.”

“A prime organizer of the conference was Mohamed Kassem, a leader of the Lebanese teachers’ union. “For the first time, in Lebanon,” he said, “we have created a platform for struggling people all over the world, secular, nationalist, leftist and Islamic to speak their views and work together, against the wars in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, against the threats to Iran and the sanctions on Sudan, against the blockade of Cuba and the attempts to block the revolutionary direction in Venezuela, Bolivia and across Latin America. ... We are building mechanisms of international cooperation and South-South solidarity, and we plan to intensify those efforts in the future.”

Cecil represented the International Action Center at the Beirut Forum. More documents and voices from the forum will appear in a future issue of Workers World newspaper.

Gaza lives on despite U.S.-Israeli terror war

Continued from page 1

group, killing three, the survivors said.

“If the allegations are upheld, all the incidents would constitute breaches of the Geneva conventions,” continued the article. “The denunciations over what happened in Khuza’a follow repeated claims of possible human rights violations from the Red Cross, the U.N. and human rights organizations. ...

“Pictures taken by photographer Bruno Stevens in the aftermath show heavy damage—and still-burning phosphorus. ‘What I can tell you is that many, many houses were shelled and that they used white phosphorus,’ said Stevens yesterday, one of the first Western journalists to get into Gaza. ‘It appears to have been indiscriminate.’ Stevens added that homes near the village that had not been hit by shell fire had been set on fire.” (The Observer, Jan. 18)

Amnesty International said on Jan. 19 that delegates it sent to Gaza had found “indisputable evidence of widespread use of white phosphorus in densely populated residential areas in Gaza City and in the north.” The use of white phosphorus as a weapon is banned by international law.

DIME—another ghastly new U.S. weapon

Doctors in Gaza have also reported catastrophic injuries they believe were caused by another terrible new weapon: a Dense Inert Metal Explosive, or DIME device. The Pentagon began developing these weapons in 2006, but before Gaza their only suspected use had been by the

Israelis during their attack on Lebanon that year.

Two European doctors working in the Gaza Strip—Jan Brommundt, a German with Medecins du Monde, working in the south Gazan city of Khan Younis, and Erik Fosse, a Norwegian surgeon at the Al-Shifa hospital in northern Gaza—told Al-Jazeera that surgeons were encountering massive organ and tissue damage yet could find no evidence of shrapnel or other hard substances having entered the body. Both said they and their colleagues suspected a DIME explosive had been used.

A DIME device, explains the news service, “expels a blade of charged tungsten dust that burns and destroys everything within a four-meter radius.

“Brommundt also described widespread but previously unseen abdominal injuries that appear minor at first but degenerate within hours, causing multiorgan failure.

“It seems to be some sort of explosive ... that disperses tiny particles ... that penetrate all organs,’ the doctor said. ‘Initially everything seems in order ... but they will present within one to five hours with an acute abdomen which looks like appendicitis but it turns out on operation that dozens of miniature particles can be found in all of their organs,’ he said. The doctor added that these injuries can’t be addressed surgically and that many patients succumbed to septicemia and died within 24 hours.”

Dr. Fosse also told Al-Jazeera there had been a significant increase in double amputations. “We suspect they [Israel]

used DIME weapons because we saw cases of huge amputations or flesh torn off the lower parts of the body,” he said. “The pressure wave [from a DIME device] moves from the ground upwards and that’s why the majority of patients have huge injuries to the lower part of the body and abdomen.” Fosse said that most of the patients he saw with these injuries were children. (Al-Jazeera, Jan. 19)

Gap between streets and suites

Israel tried to make the best of its withdrawal, saying it had been timed for the inauguration of Barack Obama as the new U.S. president. Whether true or not—the Israeli military had originally said it would stay in Gaza as long as it took to destroy the Hamas leadership—this explanation betrays Israel’s complete dependence on Washington.

While some critics of Israel claim it controls U.S. policy, the truth is that the ruling establishment in the U.S. has built Israel into a military bastion to counter the rising wave of national liberation struggles in the Middle East. Whether under secular or Islamic leadership, these mass struggles seek sovereignty and control over their national resources after more than a century of being plundered and demeaned by colonialism and imperialism.

If Washington thought that its support for this onslaught by Israel would advance its fortunes elsewhere—Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan—by spreading intimidation and fear, it now has to think again. The gap between the streets and the suites, espe-

cially in those Arab countries allied to the U.S., has never been greater.

Anger and frustration have been rising, especially against the rulers of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who are seen as traitors to the Arab cause. The Saudi monarch, King Abdullah, got much media attention when he tried to buy some credibility at a recent summit in Kuwait by pledging \$1 billion to the reconstruction of Gaza.

At the same time, an international forum was being held in Beirut to build solidarity and practical support for the Palestinian cause among secular leftist and Islamic anti-imperialist forces. Forum participant Sara Flounders of the International Action Center told Workers World, “What was most significant about this major international gathering, taking place as Gaza was burning, was that it provided an international pole of resistance in sharp contrast to the U.S./Israeli pole of collaborators.

“Major countries opposing U.S. policy—including Lebanon, Venezuela, Iran and Syria—sent top delegations that gathered with leaders of the most active anti-war and Palestine solidarity groupings whose mobilizations had brought millions into the street.

“It was clear to all that at a great cost of blood and sacrifice, Palestinians in Gaza had prevailed. Israel had not succeeded in disarming or gaining the surrender of Hamas.

The struggle continues into a new period more confident and more connected.”

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Goodbye, good riddance

George W. Bush’s farewell address was a feeble defense of his eight years as U.S. commander-in-chief. This top war criminal reminisced about the rubble he stood on following 9/11 for a piece of photo-op propaganda. He avoided explaining his role in filling scores of cities around the world with the debris of war and imperialist subjugation, killing hundreds of thousands of people, committing acts of massive state terrorism, trying to make torture an acceptable tactic, and using state powers to repress movements that oppose the crimes just mentioned.

Even in the U.S., where the population has been inculcated with racist, imperialist and chauvinist ideology, George W. Bush is clearly one of the most unpopular and hated presidents in history.

Bush bragged about creating the “Department of Homeland Security” and expanding the powers of the government to “fight terrorism.” Perhaps to the bankers and capitalists whom he served faithfully, this was an accomplishment.

For all his talk about “homeland security,” Bush and his regime allowed thousands of innocent people to die in Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, and then treated those who survived as criminals. Tens of thousands are still displaced from the Gulf region, while luxury contractors grow rich rebuilding New Orleans into a city where the poor are not welcome to return.

Bush bragged that following 9/11 not another U.S. city was filled with rubble because of a terrorist attack. But this is a lie. As he departs his throne atop the world empire of capitalism, the country he stares down upon is filled with destruction and economic terrorism.

Whole neighborhoods are emptied by home foreclosures, houses sit empty and rotting, yet the population of homeless people grows. Bush’s cronies meanwhile are the criminal bankers who caused the mortgage crisis and subsequent capitalist meltdown. Like Bush, they too have not been brought to justice. Yet. Rather, Bush has rewarded them with a \$500 billion bailout for their crimes, signing the bill with his usual sarcastic grin.

Of the 2.3 million people incarcerated in U.S. prisons, none is guilty of killing one-thousandth as many civilians, stealing one-thousandth as much money, and harming one ten-thousandth as many innocent people as the one who commands the country that locks them away. Bush’s criminality flows from the bosses and capitalists he serves, who own and control the world in their quest for never-ending profit.

Bush, Cheney and the other figures of this criminal regime will leave office. They are scheduled to live the rest of their lives in the same luxury and wealth they were born into. But let us hope for and fight toward the day when they are forced to suffer consequences for the crimes they committed against humanity and against the environment.

Bush’s departure is a welcome relief to the peoples of the world, who have already suffered too much. The capitalist system Bush so enthusiastically fought for and defended is more bankrupt and criminal than ever before. The best goodbye we can give this hated despot is to build a fightback movement against the capitalist class and stop the wars it wages on the workers and oppressed in the U.S. and around the world. □

Palestine stands for global resistance!

The following is from a talk by Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center, at the Palestine Plenary Session of the Jan. 16-18 Beirut International Forum for Resistance, Anti-Imperialism, Peoples’ Solidarity and Alternatives.

The United Nations just stands by, the European Union is in full support of the Zionist state and the whole war is paid for and equipped by U.S. imperialism. From Saudi Arabia to Egypt to India, nations who were once considered friends of Palestine stand by and watch Gaza burn—day after day after day!

The Zionists’ use of bunker busters, F-16 jets, cluster bombs, white phosphorus bombs and the systematic destruction of food warehouses and emergency relief provisions is all well publicized throughout the entire region, but absolutely nothing is done in the face of the most serious war crimes.

Why, why is this? The global inaction is because the rich and powerful are terrified of, and desperately want to destroy, resistance in their own countries. They want to destroy the glorious example of resistance—which Palestine represents to the whole world

Every one of the great powers and their collaborators hope that by attacking Heroic Gaza they can push back and demoralize the struggle in the whole region.

Gaza is a harbinger of wider war against oppressed people of the world. We are on the eve of a global capitalist crisis. This means massive insecurity, cutbacks in all social programs, unemployment for millions.

Millions of working people will seek to fight back against a system of endless war and greater and greater divide of enormous wealth for a handful and poverty for the overwhelming majority. Increasingly they will identify with and take heart from the many forms of resistance they see around them.

We need to militantly support Hamas, the democratically elected choice of the people, which is being demonized, hunted and assassinated by the Zionists, as is every heroic fighter.

We need to make it clear that we support the right to resist, the right to fire rockets, the right to dig tunnels, the right to organize the people against sure starvation and the blockade that Israel has criminally imposed.

For decades the Palestinian struggle has been the shining example to all the world of a people who refuse to submit to colonial domination, apartheid conditions, the most brutal forms of segregation and subjugation.

At this forum we salute the powerful resistance of Iraq and the struggle waged by all of the different forces opposing U.S. occupation.

We salute the resistance in Afghanistan—a resistance that the U.S. never expected.

We salute the heroic forces in Lebanon,



Sara Flounders

WW PHOTO

led by Hezbollah, which organized such a devastating setback to Israel in 2006.

We stand with the people of Syria and with Iran, who, in the face of U.S./Israeli threats, have been steadfast.

We applaud the people of Venezuela and Bolivia, who have shown such great solidarity with the struggle in Gaza as they organize to build a more just society.

We must intensify the struggle against NATO, the U.S./European Union military arm. Now we need to connect the criminal role of NATO in Afghanistan, NATO in the Balkans, in Georgia—to the phony Israeli ceasefire in Gaza. Washington now wants NATO military forces in Palestine and Egypt! NATO is the U.S. shield to do what Israel alone can no longer do. It is an effort to impose greater U.S. control in the region. But there is greater and greater resistance everywhere to these plans.

Organizers represented at this forum are involved in the most practical work of mobilizing opposition at the grass roots. Collectively we have brought millions into the streets in public demonstrations of solidarity. This is true in the Arab and Muslim world, through the entire South, and also in the imperialist countries. In some places we have blocked and even occupied the embassies of Israel and targeted countries that have collaborated with Israel’s war crimes. Activists here today have taken boats to Gaza and taken up collections for people-to-people humanitarian aid.

From the U.S.—we are proud to have helped to organize many thousands of people in the streets, emergency demonstrations day after day for three weeks in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and many other cities.

We must sustain an ongoing movement to boycott, divest and to impose sanctions [BDS] on the Israeli state and war crimes charges on its leaders. We must demand an accounting from our own governments.

We need to continue and deepen all these actions to find the best way of throwing a giant shoe into the gears of the imperialist and Zionist war machines.

Sisters and brothers—Gaza stands for global resistance.

It is the resistance of a whole people against starvation, blockade and siege.

World solidarity is a responsibility! Palestine is fighting for all of us! We must fight for Palestine! □

Child poverty grows in Michigan

Continued from page 3

state’s young African-American children and 29 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty compared with 15 percent of white non-Hispanic children.”

The report also stated that the rate of confirmed child victims of abuse or neglect jumped 14 percent between 2000 and 2007. Most of these cases involve “maltreatment” stemming from poverty, especially the inability of parents and caregivers to provide basic necessities such as food, heat and clothing.

Other findings in the report include the fact that “female-headed households with young children are 10 times more likely to be poor than married couples,” and 42 percent of a minimum-wage, full-time worker’s earnings are necessary to cover the average cost of child care for just one preschool child.

The full report detailing the status of Michigan children as of 2006-2007 can be found at www.milhs.org.

As bad as the situation outlined by Kids Count in Michigan is, it should be remembered that the study was concluded before the capitalist economic meltdown began in early-mid 2008.

Currently, Michigan leads the U.S. with an official unemployment rate of 9.6 percent, which is forecast to rise to over 11 percent as the state projects losing another 258,000 jobs in the next two years.

Dependent and vulnerable children will be subjected at ever-increasing rates to a life of poverty and deprivation, hunger and every other ill caused by the ongoing

crises of capitalism. But it doesn’t have to be this way.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world. Only capitalism and the profit motive of a tiny minority hold back the people from having everything they need for a decent and comfortable life: jobs or income, housing, utilities and water, nutritious food, education, health care, child care, transportation, clothing, recreation and leisure, and every other necessity that should be a basic, universal human right.

The struggle to end poverty, war, racism and economic attacks on workers will strengthen inside this country as the capitalist system continues its downward spiral. The capitalists and the politicians who do their bidding will use everything in their power to place their crisis on the backs of the workers and oppressed.

Every form of fightback that occurs will strengthen the working class and contribute immeasurably to the goal of ending the ills of capitalism once and for all. □

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AFGHANISTAN

U.S.-led occupation trapped at Khyber Pass

By G. Dunkel

The day Vice President-elect Joseph Biden visited Kabul, the current capital, and Khandahar, the major city in southern Afghanistan, more than 600 Afghan resistance fighters left Afghanistan and attacked a Frontier Corps outpost in northwest Pakistan.

In the largest attack on Pakistani troops in months, guerrillas armed with rocket-propelled grenade launchers and machine guns swarmed the fort on the night of Jan. 10 and fought heavily through the next morning (Wall Street Journal, Jan. 11). Unconfirmed reports said some Pakistani soldiers were captured, six were killed and seven wounded.

Biden, the outgoing chair of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, finished a trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan on Jan. 11. The trip underlined the significance that the incoming Obama administration places on the struggles in Central Asia.

Khabrein.info, an India-based Muslim news service, reported three days of heavy fighting in this area along the Afghan-Pakistan border. More than 76 people, including six security personnel and five foreign militants, were killed in that fighting.

Short reports in the press of countries with troops in Afghanistan—France, Canada, Australia, Britain and the United States—point to a pattern of small attacks, like roadside bombs and suicide missions, that don't produce big casualties on either side but keep the pressure on the occupying forces.

Major fighting in the winter is unusual in Afghanistan, a rugged country with few roads and heavy snow. So much activity on the part of the resistance forces indi-

cates they are confident they are winning and want to push their struggle forward.

In many parts of southern Afghanistan, resistance forces control most of the territory. (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 10) Resistance fighters don't bother the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) if they behave themselves and stick to their (small) portions of the countryside.

Battles in other parts of Afghanistan

The Afghan military reports that on Jan. 15 a helicopter carrying one of Afghanistan's most senior army generals and 12 soldiers crashed in western Afghanistan, killing all aboard. The army said poor maintenance and bad weather were to blame. The Taliban said they shot it down.

In the center of Kabul on Jan. 17, a car bomb exploded on the road that links the German embassy to a U.S. military base, in an area that is supposedly well-guarded. At least three people were killed and 12 injured. The U.S. military claims that only one U.S. soldier was killed but admits three were evacuated to Baghram Air Force base. (New York Times, Jan. 18)

Occupation troop surge won't stop resistance

U.S. Gen. Bantz Craddock, the supreme commander of NATO in Europe, feels that substantial U.S. forces will be in Afghanistan for "at least" a decade, with some presence for much longer. In an interview Jan. 10 with Deutsche Welle, Germany's news service, Craddock also admitted the U.S. will be sending 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan in 2009.

About President Barack Obama's desire to get the U.S.'s European allies

to do more, Craddock told DW, "I think it's going to be harder for them to do it because of decreasing defense budgets." NATO will have to find a way to replace the Dutch forces in southern Afghanistan in 2010 and the Canadians in 2011.

Pouring 30,000 troops into Afghanistan, a poor, totally undeveloped country reeling from 30 years of war, is going to demand a major logistical buildup. These troops will need, according to Gen. David McKiernan, the U.S.'s top general in Afghanistan, more support items "like helicopters, engineers, military police, transportation assets." (Associated Press, Jan. 10)

Currently 80 percent of the supplies that ISAF/NATO and the U.S. use in Afghanistan come through the Khyber Pass from the Pakistan seaport of Karachi, with most of the rest coming either by air or through a smaller, more difficult pass that leads to Khandahar. (Le Monde, Dec. 30) The U.S. has an agreement with Russia to ship supplies from the Black Sea and then through Central Asia, but that route is much more costly.

In mid-December, the attacks on supply depots in Peshawar, Pakistan, had grown so deadly and extensive that truckers were refusing cargoes going to Kabul. Even

heavily protected convoys were attacked going through the pass.

Pakistan closed the pass in early January for three days, claiming they needed to clear out the guerrillas in the area. There were hints in the reports covering this operation that the Pakistani army was upset at U.S. drones attacking Pakistani territory, but nothing was explicitly stated.

Syed Saleem Shazad, the Pakistan bureau chief of Asia Times Online (Hong Kong), who is a widely published Pakistani journalist with an international reputation, quotes a high-placed, unnamed Taliban strategist as saying, "To cut the NATO's supply lines in Pakistan is an important element of our strategy. If it is applied correctly in 2008, it will lead to NATO withdrawing its forces in 2009, but we might need another year." (Le Monde Diplomatique, October 2008)

Britain at the height of its imperial expansion was not able to control and occupy Afghanistan in the 19th century. Given the economic downturn currently afflicting Europe and the U.S., their strategic weaknesses and the implacable resistance of the Afghan people to occupation, it is unlikely the U.S. will succeed in the 21st century. □

As capitalist economy declines—

Workers fight back in Eastern Europe

By G. Dunkel

Workers, farmers and students protested in mid-January in militant demonstrations in front of the parliament buildings and then fought with the cops in Riga, Latvia; Vilnius, Lithuania; and Sofia, Bulgaria.

In Latvia and Lithuania, trade unions, opposition political parties and community organizations called the demonstrations.

In Bulgaria, farmers' organizations, community groups and right-wing opposition parties not in the right-wing government, called the actions. Lack of heat in Bulgaria sparked the Jan. 14 protests. Delivery contentions between Ukraine and Russia, which supplies Bulgaria's heating gas, had caused the shortages.

Pro-capitalist politicians and media hacks claimed in the 1990s that the overthrow of socialism in these countries and the end of the Soviet Union would make everything better and brighter. Instead, the international capitalist downturn has hit Eastern and Central Europe as hard as any area of the world, since these are the countries whose economies have the greatest dependence on foreign capital. (Journal des Finances, Jan. 17). And the capitalist regimes in Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria decided to solve their severe economic problems on the backs of the workers.

To see the effects of the downturn, look at Latvia. Its gross domestic output declined by 4.6 percent in the third quarter of 2008 and by an estimated 8 percent in the fourth quarter. Some economists project Latvia could have a 20 percent unemployment rate by the end of 2009. But rather than withdraw the 162 troops it has in Afghanistan, it is going to increase them in 2010. (Baltic News Service, Jan. 17)

In an interview on the Latvian Web site Chas, Peteris Krigers, head of the

Association of Latvian Free Trade Unions, explained why he was going to speak at the protest on Jan. 13 in Riga: "Today trade unions are more concerned about the problems of the national economy—development of production, payment of salaries, compliance with laws on labor rights, etc. In addition ... the majority of the government's policies adopted before Christmas do not comply with the Constitution and Latvian labor legislation." (BBC Worldwide Monitoring, Jan. 14)

In Latvia, 126 protesters were arrested and some were injured. Some police cars were destroyed or substantially damaged. One could see in the videos posted on YouTube that the protesters, not all young and male, confronted the cops for hours in the old section of Riga, near the parliament.

In Lithuania on Jan. 16, cops arrested 82 people and injured scores in running fights. The Lithuanian regime plans to cut the wages of public service workers by 15 percent and cut social security payments. The "value added tax" is being raised from 18 to 19 percent, which will drive up the cost of food and end the more-favorable rate of 5 percent on food and medicine.

According to Bulgarian Interior Minister Mikhail Mikhov, 3,000 people took part in the rally Jan. 14. Police arrested 150. Some 14 cops were injured and five cop cars were damaged "in a gory clash with the police." The mayor of Sofia proclaimed a bomb alert after firecrackers exploded, and the cops used this pretext to charge and clear the National Assembly Square. (BBC Monitoring, Jan. 15)

As the economic crisis spreads and deepens, the working class of these countries will be forced to continue the struggles they have started. The workers of other Eastern Europe countries, whose economies are also tottering, will likely join them. □

Left wins El Salvador elections

By Heather Cottin

In a historic election in El Salvador, the FMLN Party has become the largest party in parliament. From 1980 to 1992, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front was the leading guerrilla force in the El Salvadoran revolution. On Jan. 18, the FMLN won the mayoralties in 82 of El Salvador's cities, including the port city of La Unión, but lost San Salvador, the capital. The FMLN won a majority of the 262 municipalities, (Telesur, Jan. 19).

"Globalization" and the world economic crisis have impoverished this Central American country. El Salvador is smaller than New Jersey and has a population of 7 million. With unemployment in some areas at 65 percent, low wages, and farm foreclosures, nearly 2.5 million people have left the nation to find work, mostly in the United States.

These economic exiles have no right to vote but their contributions to their families, which nearly equal the value of the nation's exports, keep the Salvadoran economy afloat.

During the 12-year guerrilla war 1980-1991, Washington backed El Salvador's

ruling class. With strong support from El Salvador's workers and peasants, the FMLN fought the army, death squads and U.S. "advisers." The war cost 100,000 lives. A ceasefire in 1992 put the right-wing ARENA Party, with ties to the death squads and army, in power.

President Antonio Saca, head of ARENA, is the U.S. government's best friend in Central America. Saca has encouraged El Salvador's use of the dollar as the main currency, promoted anti-labor laws and low wages, and privatized water, beaches and public services. Under his watch, prices have doubled.

FMLN member Carlos Canales told Workers World that ARENA won the mayoralty of San Salvador away from the FMLN by "systematically depriving the capital city of funding for garbage collection and basic services."

Telesur reported the FMLN won 37 deputies in El Salvador's 84-member Congress, while ARENA won 33. The FMLN won most of the big cities and the municipalities surrounding San Salvador.

FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes is ten points ahead in the polls for El Salvador's presidential election, set for March. □

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En medio de una crisis capitalista ¿Qué podrá lograr empleos?

Por Fred Goldstein

La creciente crisis capitalista, que trae más y más sufrimiento cada día que pasa, está dejando a l@s trabajador@s y oprimid@s sin más alternativa que la de organizarse para luchar. Las mortales olas de desempleo, desalojos, desamparo, hambre y represión se están extendiendo mientras que los políticos de la clase gobernante y los expertos debaten sobre los términos del “paquete de estímulo.”

Con 533.000 empleos perdidos en diciembre, las cifras oficiales de desempleo aumentaron un 7,2 por ciento, nivel nunca visto en 16 años. La pérdida anual de empleos para el año 2008 fue de más de 2,59 millones, la cifra más alta desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial. El rápido aumento de despidos ha llevado a la cifra oficial de desemplead@s a 11,1 millones de trabajador@s.

El desempleo de hombres negros mayores de 20 años, que ya estaba en cifras de dígitos dobles, aumentó del 12,1 por ciento al 13,4 por ciento en diciembre. Para los jóvenes negros entre la edad de 16 y 19 años, las cifras saltaron vertiginosamente del 32,2 por ciento al 33,7 por ciento en el mismo mes. El desempleo entre los jóvenes blancos también subió a un 18,7 por ciento.

Las cifras raramente publicadas de “desempleo total” subió del 12,6 por ciento al 13,5 por ciento. El desempleo total incluye a aquell@s forzad@s a tomar trabajos de tiempo parcial que necesitan también trabajos de tiempo completo como también a l@s trabajador@s que están tan desmoralizad@s que han cesado de buscar trabajo.

El número promedio de horas trabajadas bajó un 33,3 en diciembre, las cifras más bajas desde que estos récords comenzaron en el año 1964.

El aspecto más importante de las cifras del mes de diciembre es que este mes es generalmente el mes de más incremento en los empleos, aún durante los tiempos lentos, cuando las tiendas se preparan para los días festivos, los fabricantes emplean trabajador@s adicionales para mover más rápido las órdenes para los inventarios, y

las industrias de entretenimiento y restaurante tienen ventas más altas.

Sin embargo, diciembre vio la caída más grande en ventas desde que comenzó a llevar el récord en 1970, a pesar de las ofertas especiales de una rebaja del 50 por ciento a un 70 por ciento y las ofertas de ‘compre uno y reciba otro gratis.’ El Consejo Internacional de Centros Comerciales estimó que 148.000 tiendas cerraron en el 2008. Y calculó que otras 73.100 tiendas cerrarán en los primeros seis meses del 2009. Los cierres resultarían en la pérdida de entre 625.000 a 800.000 empleos. (Washington Post).

‘El programa de estímulo’ mas pequeño que una curita

Considerando la ola catastrófica de desempleo, con 20 millones de desemplead@s o severamente deficientemente emplead@s por lo menos ahora, y con la perspectiva de un incremento masivo en el próximo período, todas de especulaciones sobre si el “paquete de estímulo” agregará 3 o 3,5 millones de empleos en los próximos dos años parece totalmente inadecuada.

La cifra del gobierno de 11,1 millones de desemplead@s, o el 72 por ciento, se basa en una fuerza laboral de 154 millones. La cifra más realista del “total de desempleo” citada anteriormente del 13,5 por ciento es mas bien 20,6 millones, según el gobierno.

Además, el paquete de incentivos que se está preparando ahora llega a \$775 mil millones. De esto, un 40 por ciento es en recortes de impuestos, que necesariamente no va a crear empleos. Y lo peor del todo es que un 90 por ciento de los gastos están reservados para capitalistas privados. Por lo tanto es en gran parte una entrega a los capitalistas con la esperanza de que ellos crearán empleos.

Con toda la palabrería sobre el estudio del Nuevo Trato (“New Deal”), este programa asume un método opuesto al de la administración de Roosevelt. Mientras que el Nuevo Trato fue una ayuda muy parcial, llena de defectos y limitaciones y calculada para rescatar al capitalismo evitando un levantamiento masivo de

l@s trabajador@s, la Administración de Progreso en Obras (WPA por las siglas en ingles) creó sin embargo ocho millones de empleos directamente durante la década, o la quinta parte de la fuerza laboral. En cualquier momento dado, entre 2 y 3 millones trabajador@s estuvieron emplead@s por el gobierno en esos programas. Esto sería hoy el equivalente de entre 9 y 10 millones.

Los planes actuales para gastos gubernamentales establecen una situación en la que un@s 20 millones de trabajador@s desemplead@s tendrán que competir por 1 y 1,5 millones de puestos en el año en curso, asumiendo que los proyectos para la creación de empleos estén correctos. Tal situación en la cual l@s trabajador@s estén buscando desesperadamente trabajos escasos tendrá la tendencia de bajar los salarios y crear confrontaciones entre l@s trabajadores para beneficio de los empleadores.

L@s trabajador@s por supuesto deben tomar ventaja de cualquier oportunidad para obtener nuevos empleos y alimentar a sus familias. Pero no deben dejar que los economistas “expertos” en Washington y en Wall Street impongan las condiciones del paquete económico. Deberían organizarse para imponer sus propias demandas al gobierno capitalista.

Podrían comenzar por demandar que cada 5 centavos de los más de un millón millones de dólares regalados a los bancos sean recuperados y hechos disponibles para trabajos y servicios para l@s trabajador@s y sus comunidades. Los bancos son tan arrogantes que ni siquiera reportan al gobierno lo que están haciendo con este dinero.

Del rescate a la lucha

La lucha está en sus etapas tempranas y l@s trabajador@s están todavía en la defensiva. Es natural que en esta etapa las organizaciones populares quieran tomar ventaja del término “rescate” para exponer los regalos a los bancos y los patrones. Pero mientras avanza la lucha, el concepto de que el gobierno capitalista rescate a l@s trabajador@s debe convertirse en el concepto de que l@s trabajador@s están luchando.

Los fondos para contener la crisis deben ser transferidos al control de l@s trabajador@s, sindicatos, organizaciones comunitarias y otras organizaciones de las masas y no bajo el control de los patronos. Son las masas las que sufren la crisis. Son ellas las que deben estar capacitadas para combatirla.

Sólo las masas van a ser las que aseguren un salario adecuado, un empleo, derechos sindicales, prácticas antirracistas y derechos para las trabajadoras. Los capitalistas son hábiles y experimentados en la manipulación de las subvenciones gubernamentales supuestamente establecidas para la creación de trabajos. Saben cómo dar la vuelta a las cosas para maximizar sus ganancias. El depender de los capitalistas para rescatar a la clase trabajadora es la peor ruta posible a seguir.

Debe haber un movimiento para la creación de órganos de poder popular a nivel local, regional y nacional para parar la pérdida de empleo y defender el derecho de tod@s l@s trabajador@s a tener un

trabajo; para demandar la garantía de un trabajo o ingreso; del fin a evicciones y pérdidas de vivienda; para organizar a l@s desemplead@s y a l@s que tienen trabajo en un movimiento unido que demande trabajo para tod@s.

Mientras se despliega la crisis tenemos que plantear la cuestión de ¿cuál es la causa de la crisis? Paul Krugman, un economista keynesiano, cita el hecho de que la economía estadounidense podría crear productos y servicios por valor de \$30 billones (millon millones) durante los próximos dos años. Eso sería suficiente para reducir enormemente el desempleo.

Krugman, quien recientemente ganó el Premio Nobel de economía, limitó su comentario a una crítica sobre el programa económico de Barack Obama. Él evadió la cuestión fundamental. No se molestó en preguntar el ¿por qué, cuando hay la capacidad económica de emplear a tod@s l@s trabajador@s, está la tasa de desempleo tan astronómica?

La respuesta es que mientras la economía estadounidense puede producir productos y servicios que valen \$30 billones, estos son en la forma de productos que deben ser vendidos por ganancias y solamente por ganancias. Las necesidades de los seres humanos no significa nada para el capitalismo.

No es que las masas no necesiten de los productos y servicios que valen \$30 billones. De hecho, hoy en día están privad@s de los medios para vivir por una crisis económica artificialmente creada por el capitalismo mismo.

Las masas han sido empobrecidas por más de 30 años por el rompimiento de los sindicatos, por los años de recortes de salario y beneficios, por la destrucción masiva de empleos a salarios sostenibles y su remplazo por empleos a sueldo mínimo. A su vez, las corporaciones han competido una contra otra para capturar los mercados y vender más y más — solamente para rendir más ganancias. Han fomentado toda especie de deuda —de tarjetas de crédito, hipotecas, préstamos de automóvil y varias más — para asegurar que recibían más ganancias.

Finalmente la estructura entera se ha derrumbado en una crisis de sobreproducción capitalista. Hay demasiados automóviles para venderlos por una ganancia. Hay demasiadas viviendas para venderlas por una ganancia. Hay demasiado acero para venderlo por una ganancia. Y lo mismo con otras comodidades. Esto ha resultado en una ola de despidos, de crisis hipotecarias, desahucios, hambre y la falta de vivienda.

Como un sistema de explotación para ganancias, el capitalismo en si está al fondo de la crisis. Mientras que l@s trabajador@s y l@s oprimid@s se despierten para demandar sus derechos, la meta primaria debe ser la destrucción del capitalismo y la construcción de un sistema dirigido por la necesidad humana y no por las ganancias. Ese sistema es el socialismo.

Goldstein es el autor del libro recientemente publicado “Low-Wage Capitalism: Colossus with Feet of Clay” [“El capitalismo de sueldos bajos: coloso con pies de barro”]. Vea lowwagecapitalism.com para información sobre el libro y cómo pedirlo.



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